It takes less time to prevent an accident than it does to make a report of one

What

The Safety Committees

Of The

Chicago and North Western Railway

Have Done For

The Conservation of Men

By

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DURING the last ten or fifteen years there has been much discussion in the public press, among the people, in the legislatures and in Congress on the question of prevention of accidents by law; and, in pursuance of the theory that the fixing of greater liability on the employer to respond in damages would make them more careful and thereby reduce the number of accidents, employers' liability laws, laws taking away the defense of fellow servant, assumption of risk, contributory negligence, as well as workmen's compensation acts, have been enacted, with the result of requiring the employer to respond in damages, generally for the benefit of lawyers, and occasionally for the benefit of the injured man or his dependents, but without any result worth mentioning in the way of reducing the accidents or decreasing the toll of death and injury, which is what the workingman, the employer and the public want and need. How badly some such action is needed is shown by the September, 1908, bulletin issued by the Commissioner of Labor of the United States, which on page 458, shows 35,000 workingmen killed in industrial accidents each year, or one every 15 minutes of every day in the year, and the injuries at two million every year or one every 16 seconds of every minute and hour and day in the year and, contrary to the general understanding, only ONE-TENTH of the deaths and ONE-SIXTEENTH of the injuries were railroad men, the other NINE-TENTHS and FIFTEEN-SIXTEENTHS being workmen employed in the other industries of the country. As nothing was accomplished by such laws, some other method had to be adopted, as neither the workingman, the employer

or the public could longer stand any such drain of human life, greater than the loss of lives in any one year in that terrible Civil War through which we passed fifty years ago.

The railroad list of casualties as shown by the last report of the Interstate Commerce Commission for the year ending June 30, 1911, was 3,602 railroad men killed and 126,039 injured, or nearly ten per cent of all the men employed, of which 3,163 were killed and 46,802 injured in operating accidents, and 439 killed and 79,237 injured in industrial accidents, such as accidents in shops, roundhouses, offices, stations and repair yards.

The management of the North Western Railway, being both far-sighted and humane, recognized, perhaps earlier than most other employers of labor, the great suffering that was caused by avoidable accidents resulting in death and injury to its men, passengers and others, and because of that as well as for the further reason that, during the year ending June 30, 1910, our accidents resulting in the deaths of employes had increased 37 per cent, to passengers 38 per cent and to outsiders 19 per cent, and injuries had increased 27, 38 and 12 per cent, respectively, determined about a year ago to inaugurate a movement to reduce such accidents, both as a matter of humanity and for the purpose of increasing the efficiency of its organization, *as every time a capable, experienced employe was killed or injured it not only brought suffering and sorrow to himself and family, but necessitated the employing of a new man in his place, thereby increasing the risk to the other men in the service and at the same time decreasing the efficiency of the organization, frequently very seriously.*

The work of organizing and directing this movement was assigned to me and, as all my experience had been with men and not with machines, and believing that only through the active co-operation and assistance of the men who were being injured could any plan for the prevention of accidents be made a success, and that if the men could be made to understand the matter right, their co-operation and assistance could be secured, I undertook to organize the movement on the basis of making them the controlling factor in the work.

We commenced by holding meetings on all the 17 divisions of the system, first of the division officers and foremen, and afterward of the men, and explained what we were trying to do and its necessity.

That it was the men and not the stockholders, officers or foremen who were being killed and injured and paying the fearful toll in death and injury.

That it was the men and their families who would be most benefited by the prevention of accidents.

That the golden rule in railroading—"It is better to cause a delay than to cause an accident"—should be observed.

We also tried to impress upon them:

That it actually took less time to prevent an accident than it did to report one.

That when we needed new men, if we had 50 per cent fewer accidents on our road than other lines had, we would have the pick of all the best railroad men in the country. Wages and other working conditions being practically the same on all railroads, all the good men would want to work on the railroad where there was the smallest risk of being killed or injured.

That it was the little accidents that make up the big total, just as it is the little things that count everywhere.

That on our road 12 out of 13 employes were killed in the little accidents and 33 out of 34 injured in the little accidents, and the other one killed and injured being big, or train accidents, such as collisions and derailments.

That consequently it was the little accidents we wanted to get rid of and the big ones would take care of themselves.

That we wanted to get rid of the careless habit and ACQUIRE THE SAFETY HABIT.

That we wanted to stop making cripples, widows and orphans.

That the greatest risk a careful man runs is of injury from some careless fellow-worker, and that when the careless man will not change his ways and try to do better, he should be gotten out of the service.

That it takes less time to learn to do a thing right than to explain why you did it wrong.

That the exercise of care to prevent accident was a duty which each employe owed to himself and his fellow-employes.

That every accident is a *notice* that something is wrong with the man, plant or methods, and should be immediately investigated by person in charge of work to ascertain the cause and apply a remedy.

That each employe was responsible for the safety of others as well as himself.

That in case of doubt, adopt the safe course:

Speed must always give way to safety.

That if we could reduce the accidents 50 per cent, the assessments for life and accident insurance which the men are paying ought to be reduced in the same proportion.

Safety committees were then organized on each division of the road, composed of the three division officers and one or more representatives from each class of labor, such as engineers, firemen, conductors, brakemen, switchmen, trackmen, stationmen, bridgemen and carmen.

The same committees were organized in the large terminal yards, the members being yardmasters, switchmen, engineers, firemen, trackmen and carmen.

In the shops, committees were also organized, composed of all classes of labor—always the men who were doing the work and getting hurt (not the bosses), being the large majority of the membership. These committees meet once each month. The men serve not less than six months nor more than twelve, and are paid for their time and expenses while attending meetings.

Then the Central Safety Committee was organized, composed of ten general and division officers, representing all branches of the service, of which committee I am the chairman, and to which committee all division, shop and yard committees report and to whom all changes in standards, rules and customs are submitted and, if approved, are referred to the management for adoption. All matters local to the divisions, shops and yards are disposed of by such committees without reference to the Central Safety Committee.

During the first year of this organization 5,619 different subjects were brought to the attention of these committees and acted upon.

Every member of the committees is furnished with a safety button as his badge of office and is made to feel that in the meetings all are on a par, and each comes there as a committeeman, not as an officer or employe, and that all are full partners in the enterprise and responsible for its success.

That suggestions that might bring about greater safety and efficiency in operation were not only invited, but solicited. Postal cards were furnished to the members of the committees and employes generally, on which immediate notice could be given to the chairman of the division committee of dangerous conditions and practices, so that the same could be remedied immediately and not wait for the meeting.

Trips of inspection were made over the various divisions on special trains for the purpose of demonstrating to the members that a real inspection to find defects was desired, for the purpose of advertising the committee to all the employes, as well as for the purpose of getting in closer touch with the members. Each division, shop and yard committee is furnished with enough copies of all the proceedings of the Central Safety Committee so that each member will know what is done, not only with their recommendations, but also with the recommendations made by all the other committees.

They are also furnished with detailed report of all accidents by divisions, statements of accidents by causes, and a statement of avoidable accidents that happened the previous month.

Slips are put on pay checks of all employes each month calling attention to specific acts of carelessness, to rules or other things that may cause or prevent accidents, a different one being gotten up for each month, so as to avoid sameness and repetition. See Exhibit "A."

After the work was well under way, it was decided to award a banner to the division having the fewest accidents in proportion to the number of employes and its train mileage, and the Central Safety Committee awarded that banner to the Sioux City Division in 1911, and to the Wisconsin Division in 1912. I believe that it is the first time that such an award has been made in the history of railroading in this or any other country.

On a railroad 8,000 miles long, running through nine states, it necessarily took some time and considerable work to lay the foundation for such an organization and to get it properly started, but on January 1, 1911, our organization was practically completed.

We also adopted a plan of writing letters of commendation of individual and collective efforts to bring about greater safety, which could be posted on the bulletin boards or shown to the members of the committees or other employes, and letters to division officers calling attention to certain specific accidents, in order that steps might be taken to warn the men, and thus prevent their recurrence.

There are now about 590 officers and men serving on these safety committees, and if Benjamin Franklin's saying, "The eyes of the master can do more work than both his hands," is true, surely 590 pairs of eyes trained to look for defective conditions and practices can do more than the eyes of one

person, or fifty persons, and from the results that have been attained during the first 16 months that the safety organization has been in existence (during which time the earnings of the Company decreased about six per cent), we have shown a very gratifying improvement in matter of cleaning up obstructions in yards, station platforms, shops and roundhouses, cleaning windows, putting up railings at dangerous places, covering gearing of machines, blocking frogs and guard rails, in putting a stop to dangerous practices and customs and in repairing cars, engines and machines, which has *not only brought about greater safety, but also more efficient operation.*

We also show the following reduction in our accident record, as compared with the last sixteen months prior to the organization of the safety committees:

		Per Cent.
27 fewer trainmen killed	a decrease of	53.
1940 fewer trainmen injured	a decrease of	44.
10 fewer switchmen killed	a decrease of	41.7
146 fewer switchmen injured	a decrease of	17.1
3 fewer stationmen killed	a decrease of	50.
148 fewer stationmen injured	a decrease of	16.8
1044 fewer trackmen injured	a decrease of	43.8
134 fewer bridgemen injured	a decrease of	31.4
5 fewer car repairers killed	a decrease of	71.4
34 fewer car repairers injured	a decrease of	8.4
1 fewer shop and R. H. men killed	a decrease of	14.3
261 fewer shop and R. H. men injured	a decrease of	15.
1 fewer other employe killed	a decrease of	7.7
1 fewer other employe injured	a decrease of	.3

But an increase of 2 trackmen killed in 1911–1912; 3 bridgemen killed in 1911–1912, same as 1909–1910.

Total reduction of—

45 fewer employes killed	a decrease of	31.5
3708 fewer employes injured	a decrease of	32.2
9 fewer passengers killed	a decrease of	42.9
201 fewer passengers injured	a decrease of	17.5
53 fewer other persons killed	a decrease of	18.4
87 fewer other persons injured	a decrease of	11.2
Total of 107 fewer persons killed	a decrease of	23.7
Total of 3996 fewer persons injured	a decrease of	29.8

During seven of these months no trainmen were killed.

This not only means that in the last sixteen months we have had 107 fewer paper reports of people killed, and 3,996 fewer paper reports of people injured than we had during the preceding sixteen months; but that 107 fewer times did we have to call the priest and the undertaker; that 107 fewer times were widows and orphans made and sorrow and sometimes destitution brought into families; that 3,996 fewer times was some one injured, often permanently; that just that many fewer times did we have to call the doctor, and that in our own railroad family 3,753 times did we avoid increasing the risk to other employes, our passengers and patrons by taking experienced men out of the service and putting green ones in their places, and that just that many fewer times did we avoid decreasing the efficiency of our organization.

This result has been obtained because we have learned that accidents were *not inevitable*, as we had commenced to believe, but, on the contrary, a large proportion of them could be avoided by the exercise of care.

If the first 16 months' work is an indication of what we can do in the future, it would certainly seem to show that the plan which we have adopted, in which ENTHUSIASM AND CO-OPERATION FOR SAFETY is the keynote, will surely result, as the years go by, in greater SAFETY and REGULARITY, which is what we all want.

And when we commence to exercise the same care in the selection of new men and in educating them as to their duties that we do in the selection and care of new machinery, cars and engines—and somehow it has always seemed to me that men were the important element on a railroad, or in any

business, not the machine—and when the man who inspects is not charged with the duty of repairing the defects he discovers, when every accident is investigated immediately by some competent, disinterested person for the purpose of ascertaining the cause and applying a remedy, and not to cover it up, we will bring about much better results.

The Pennsylvania System, the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern, the Baltimore & Ohio, the Frisco System, the New York Central Lines, the Illinois Central, the Burlington and some other roads, have adopted the same safety organization as the North Western, or one very similar, and many other roads are now considering the matter.

What it will mean to the workingmen of this country, their families and dependents, to the industries employing them and to the public generally if, by concerted and enthusiastic effort and cooperation, we could bring about a reduction of 25 or 50 per cent in the fatalities and injuries, must be obvious to everyone. I am satisfied, from the little experience that I have had, that it can be done.

Emerson says, "Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is a triumph of enthusiasm." Whether a movement tending toward safety in industrial operation, or, in other words, a movement *for the conservation of men*, is a great and commanding movement depends, perhaps, upon the point of view from which the subject is considered; but if, as to most of us, life is the most precious of our possessions, any movement for the preservation of life ought to be a great and commanding one, and should be enthusiastically supported by every workingman as well as by every employer, and with such support it must necessarily be successful.

Remember that it is better to cause delay than it is to cause an accident.

In twelve months 153 men were injured by stepping on nails projecting from boards and cleats taken from cars and thrown on the ground close to the track. Why not pile the boards and cleats six feet from the rails with the nails down and save such injuries? If you don't do this, you may be the next victim.

Remember that it takes less time to learn to do a thing right than it does to explain why you did it wrong.

Exercise of care to prevent accidents is a duty which you owe to yourself and your fellow employes.

You are responsible for the safety of others as well as yourself.

Better be careful than crippled.

During the last twelve months FOUR employes were killed and ONE HUNDRED THIRTEEN injured by falling over obstructions left too near the rail. Why not pile all material SIX feet from rail, clean up the piles of coal, cinders, dirt and drawbars in the yards, stop such accidents and at the same time make our yards and station grounds more presentable? Rule No. 1185 requires it.

The greatest risk of injury a careful man runs is through the carelessness of some thoughtless or reckless fellow worker. When you find such a man, try and teach him to be careful. If he will not be taught, get him out of the service before he kills or injures himself or someone else; perhaps it may be you.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREVENTION OF ACCIDENTS.

1. REMEMBER IT IS BETTER TO CAUSE A DELAY THAN TO CAUSE AN ACCIDENT.

2. Clean up obstructions alongside the track and between tracks and platforms and fill up holes in the track or ground adjacent thereto. Grade stakes should be driven down. Rules 1139 and 1185.

3. Clear platforms of baggage, freight, trucks and running boards and keep same in good repair. Keep the handles of the trucks hooked up when not in use. Rule 861.

4. Keep platforms and space around stand pipes and water tanks clear of ice and snow.

5. Remove obstructions to view at highway crossings. Crossing signs should be placed where they can be most easily seen by persons approaching track.

6. Always go back the full half mile when flagging trains and be sure to have the necessary torpedoes, fuses, lanterns and flags, and sufficient clothing on to stay out if it is cold. Do not be afraid to use torpedoes and fuses. EVERY TRAINMAN SHOULD KNOW RULE NO. 99 BY HEART AND COMPLY WITH IT LITERALLY.

7. Cars on side tracks must be in to clear and stockyard gates secured. Rule 966.

8. Trainmen and switchmen should not work on side of track next to loading platforms where space is narrow.

9. Section men should not leave tools on or too near the track.

10. Exercise of care to prevent accidents is a duty which you owe to yourself and your fellow employes.

11. Every accident is a notice that something may be wrong with the man, plant or method and should be immediately investigated by person in charge of work to ascertain cause and apply remedy.

12. Cover culverts inside the switches or within 300 feet of switches.

13. Cut off switch ties, properly ballast track at switches, entrances to hand car houses and approaches to bridges and culverts.

14. Report telegraph or electric street car or telephone wires, or any obstruction over track, when it will not clear a man on top of highest car. See that spouts of water tanks are hung so as to clear a man on top of cars.

15. Blocking in frogs and guard rails must be kept in good condition. Rule 1177.

16. Report electric bells which do not ring, flagmen when not on duty and gatemen who do not properly lower gates for approaching trains.

17. Report any defect in track, bridges or equipment or any condition which will cause an accident. Rule 700.

18. Do not block highway crossings with trains. See rules 863 and 963.

19. Engines should not stand within 100 feet of highway crossings. Rule 1050.

20. In moving cars or trains over crossings, have someone on leading car or ground. Rule 102-A.

21. Stop men going between moving cars or engines. Rule 717.

22. One of the most prolific causes of accidents is from pieces of boards, boxes and planking left in yards, shops and stations with nails sticking in them. Why not turn the nails down or pick up the material?

23. Teach men to be careful and you may prevent injury to yourself and others.

24. Stop men riding on pilots of engines. Rule 719.

25. Keep planking at highway crossings and approaches to stations in good condition.

26. Foremen of extra gangs should be provided with whistles to use in warning men of approaching trains.

27. Use more care in loading and unloading rails from both flat and hand cars.

28. Stop using hand and velocipede cars to carry women and children and outsiders. Rule 1136 and 1182.

29. Report all outsiders using hand, velocipede or motor cars.

30. Hand cars, velocipede and motor cars must not be run after dark without displaying a red light. Rules 1137 and 1183.

31. When two or more hand cars are following each other, they must be 200 feet apart. Rules 1136 and 1182.

32. Lock turn tables. Rule 720.

33. Take care of drunken men on trains or tracks or at stations; protect them from injury and when possible turn them over to the police.

34. Bars in vestibule doors of coaches should be put down when doors are opened so passengers can use them.

35. Vestibules must be closed when trains are in motion. Rule 938.

36. Freight trains carrying passengers must stop with caboose at platform. Rule 958.

37. IT TAKES LESS TIME TO PREVENT AN ACCIDENT THAN IT DOES TO REPORT ONE.

38. Inspect cars, engines, windows, doors and seats at time of accident and make report on form No. 751. Rule 806. Tag all defects discovered with red card, form No. 995.

39. Make repairs before, not after, an accident.

40. Put up flags when repairing cars and lock repair tracks. Rule 26.

41. Report engines on regular night runs backing up without headlight burning on tank.

42. Engines must not be blown off in yards, at highway crossings or under viaducts.

43. Stop overloading tanks of engines with coal.

44. Observe rules 105, D-153 and D-153A in approaching or passing through station at which a passenger train is due.

45. Coal chutes, chains, ladders and other apparatus should have frequent inspection. Have sufficient light in sheds.

46. Every time an employe is killed or injured it brings suffering and sorrow to himself and family and necessitates the employing of an inexperienced man in his place, thereby increasing the risk of injury to all other employes.

47. Close doors of box and refrigerator cars. Rule 725.

48. Don't switch cars on loading tracks without notice to persons loading or unloading freight. Rule 963. A switchman or trainman should precede engine or cars moving on industrial tracks. No car containing passengers, employes or persons in charge of freight must be switched unless coupled to the engine and air brakes in use. Rule 102-A.

49. Tracks are not made to walk or stand on, but for cars and engines to run on, so when you are walking about trains taking numbers, giving signals or anything else, stand outside the rails

50. THIRTY-THREE per cent of all the people killed and EIGHTY-THREE per cent of all the people injured on the railroads of the country are employes, not officers or owners of the road. So employes are the people most interested in preventing accidents.

51. The first sixteen months of Safety work shows a decrease of THIRTY-ONE per cent in employes killed and THIRTY-TWO per cent in employes injured. Why not make it fifty per cent during the next eight months of 1912?

52. Make report of every accident whether you think the Company to blame or not. Rules 803 and 804.

53. BETTER BE CAREFUL THAN CRIPPLED.

54. No one should run an engine or train who is physically or mentally unfit to perform his full duty or who has not had sufficient rest.

55. Don't leave torpedoes on public highways or where children can get them to play with.

56. Rules are made because experience has proven their necessity. Don't fail to observe them for fear of being called a tenderfoot or a Company man. Their observance will prevent injury to yourself and others.

57. In opening crossings always cut the cars at the far side of the highway and twenty feet back of sidewalk or line of highway away from the engine so as to leave the whole street free of obstruction, and when practicable and another train is approaching, station a flagman on the crossing to warn persons about to cross the track of its approach.

58. Report men who are reckless and careless and disregard Safety rules, not to harm them, but to help them and to prevent injury to themselves and others; it may be you who will suffer from their recklessness.

59. REMEMBER THAT TWELVE OUT OF EVERY THIRTEEN EMPLOYES KILLED AND THIRTY-THREE OUT OF EVERY THIRTY-FOUR INJURED ARE IN LITTLE ACCIDENTS, NOT IN COLLISIONS OR DERAILMENTS, SO TRY TO PREVENT LITTLE ACCIDENTS.